



# “Serving Ohio’s Seniors”

United States Senator  
George V. Voinovich





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## *U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich*

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Dear Fellow Ohioan,

It is my pleasure to announce that on November 25th 2003, Congress finally passed the Prescription Drug and Medicare Improvement Act. This historic piece of legislation will provide the largest overhaul of the Medicare system in 40 years and includes a voluntary prescription drug benefit for seniors. After years of having to carry the burden of high prescription drug costs without any assistance, over 40 million Medicare beneficiaries nationwide, including 1.6 million Ohioans, will have access to affordable prescription drugs.



As a member and co-chair of the Prescription Drug Task Force, I worked hard to enact this vital piece of legislation. Information in this brochure will help explain how it will benefit you.

Throughout my public service career, I have worked to improve the lives of Ohio seniors. As a member of the Ohio House of Representatives, I was the chief sponsor of legislation that led to the constitutional amendment that created the homestead tax exemption for Ohio's low-income seniors.

Realizing the importance of long-term care options for



seniors and their care givers, I worked as governor to substantially expand the state's PASSPORT program, allowing thousands of eligible Ohioans to remain in their own homes and benefit from the assistance of local care services, as an alternative to nursing home care.

My commitment to Ohio's seniors has continued as your U.S. Senator. Building on what we did in Ohio, I helped launch BenefitsCheckUp.org to make it easier for seniors to get important information about benefits to which they're entitled. The service, as in Ohio, is free to the nation's seniors.

Great strides were made for Ohio's seniors when I was governor, and I am committed to working even harder in the U.S. Senate to make seniors' lives better. I am honored that you have entrusted me with the responsibility to shape legislation that will not only affect you and me, but tomorrow's seniors as well. Please feel free to contact me about these or any other subjects that may concern you.

Sincerely,

George V. Voinovich

United States Senator

*P.S. I remind people that while Sen. DeWine is the senior senator from Ohio, I am the senior citizen senator from Ohio.*



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## *Senator George V. Voinovich*

### *Senior Accomplishments*

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• **21st Century Medicare reform** – On November 25, 2003 Congress passed the Prescription Drug and Medicare Improvement Act, embodying the largest overhaul to Medicare since its inception in 1965. For the first time ever Medicare will provide a voluntary prescription drug benefit to seniors in order to help reduce the cost of prescription medication. Senator Voinovich enthusiastically supported the measure as it was signed by President Bush into law on December 9.

• **Home Health Payment Fairness Act** – As many Medicare beneficiaries receive home health care benefits, Senator Voinovich has been concerned with the automatic 15 percent cut in Medicare home health payments that went into effect on October 1, 2002. He has joined a bipartisan congressional effort to urge the Senate Finance Committee to bring



the Home Health Payment Fairness Act to the Senate floor to eliminate the reduction in home health care payments and enable seniors to receive the medical and social services they need in the comfort of their own homes.

- **Social Security Guarantee Act** – Senator Voinovich joined Senator Santorum (R-PA) as a co-sponsor of legislation that would guarantee in law that seniors receive every cent the government has promised them under Social Security, including annual cost-of-living increases.

- **Generic Drug Education Campaign** – Prior to passage of the Medicare Act, Senator Voinovich won passage of legislation of an interim step to help seniors learn how they can save money by using generic drugs.



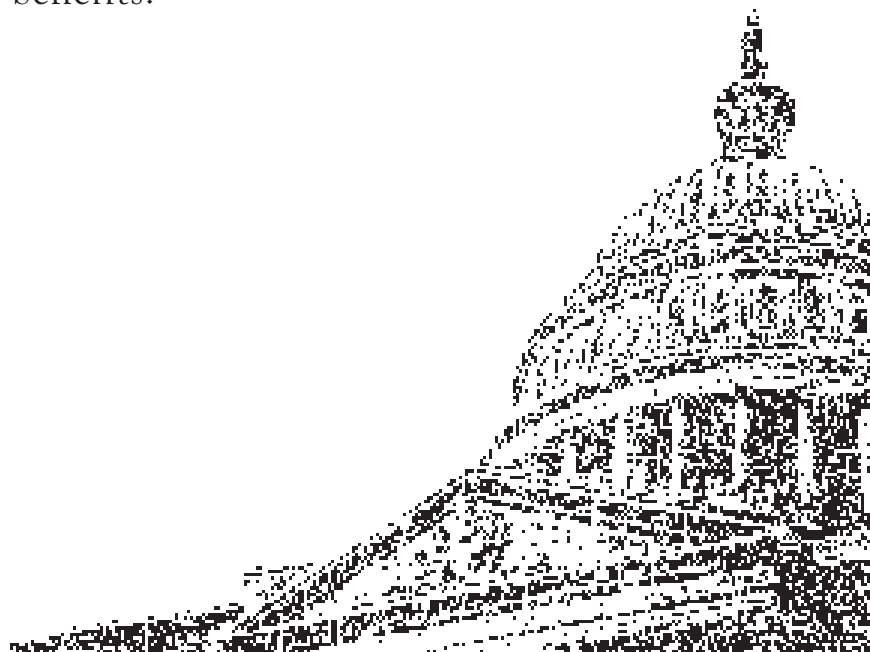


• **BenefitsCheckUp** – Senator Voinovich helped kick off a new, national online benefits screening program last June, [BenefitsCheckUp.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org), modeled after Ohio’s Benefits Eligibility Screening Service (BESS) that Voinovich implemented as governor of Ohio. [BenefitsCheckUp.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org) provides online access to programs available to seniors including: employment programs, financial assistance, health care programs, home energy assistance, housing assistance, in-home services, legal services, nutrition programs, prescription drug assistance and volunteer opportunities. This information can be accessed online at “<http://www.benefitscheckup.org>” [www.benefitscheckup.org](http://www.benefitscheckup.org).

• **Health Care Access and Medical Liability Reform** – Many Ohioans’ access to health care is at risk because their doctors may be forced to close up their practices or move out of state. The threat of increasing costs of medical liability, spearheaded by personal injury lawyers and their frivolous lawsuits and uncapped jury awards, is driving doctors out of their practices and reducing patients’ access to quality health care. Senator Voinovich has been actively working to find a solution to this problem and is a co-author of legislation to bring needed reforms to medical liability, provide needed relief for medical professionals, and help provide patients with continued access to the physicians they have come to know and trust.



• **Standing Up for Veterans Health Care** – In gratitude for their sacrifices in the name of freedom, Senator Voinovich believes our nation owes our veterans a quality health care system, which is why he helped create “Tricare for Life” to allow military retirees over 65 years old to continue receiving health care benefits from the military’s TRICARE program and low-cost prescriptions through the Pentagon’s mail-order pharmacy program. In addition, Senator Voinovich is working to improve the way the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responds to veterans’ requests for benefits and medical records, and to help the VA recruit and retain the highly-skilled workforce required to help the millions of veterans who rely on the VA for health care, disability compensation, and survivor and burial benefits.

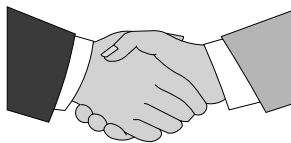




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## *Senator Voinovich and Social Security*

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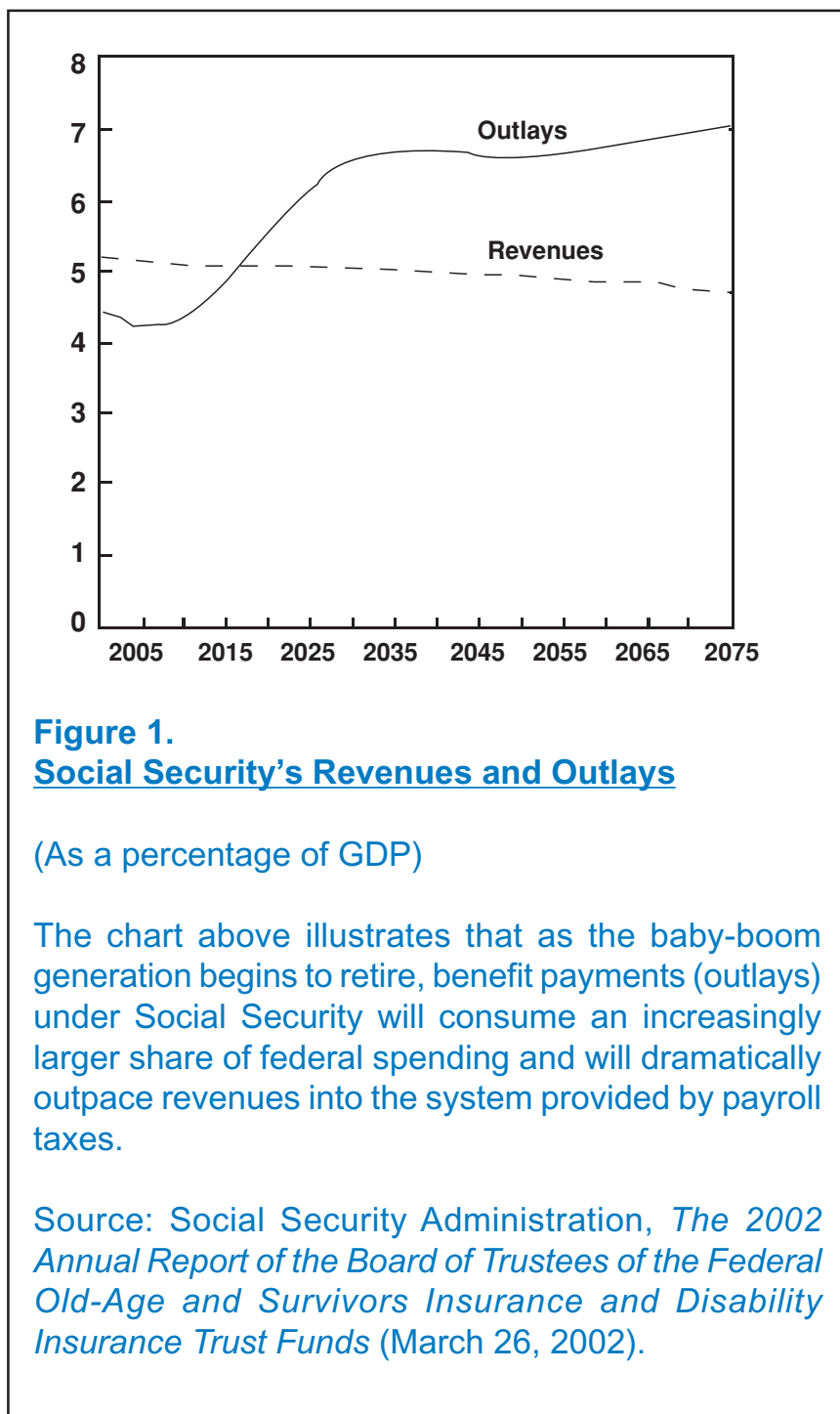


Social Security is a sacred trust between the federal government and every American, protecting 154 million current workers, and providing benefits to 45 million retired and disabled workers—1.9 million in Ohio alone.

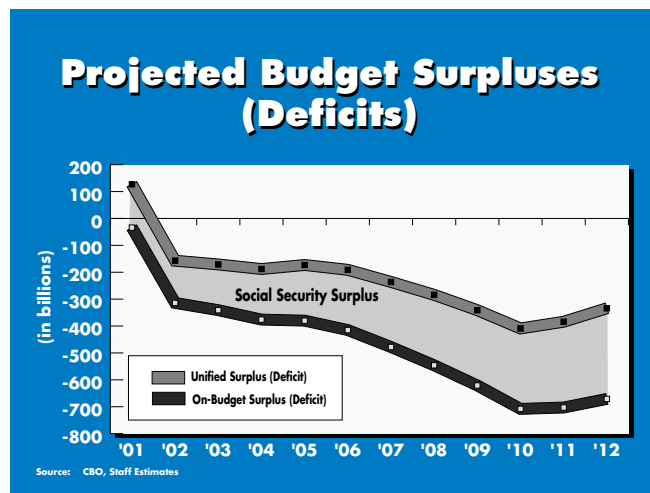
The looming retirement of the baby-boom generation will soon place tremendous demands on the program. Ensuring that the program's promise of financial protection remains intact, spending by the federal government will need to increase dramatically (see figure 1).

- **Protecting the Social Security Surplus –** Unfortunately, in 2002 Congress spent the entire Social Security surplus—all \$159 billion of it—and unless we change course, Congress could do so again in the future (see Figure 2). That is why, since coming to the Senate, Senator Voinovich has been a strong advocate of “locking away” the Social Security surplus so it is not used for wasteful government programs.





Senator Voinovich was proud to have introduced legislation in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress that would have created a lockbox for Social Security surplus funds. He believes Americans, and especially seniors, agree with me—Social Security funds should not be used to pay for the day-to-day operation of the federal government. Making the Social Security trust fund solvent in the long-term and restoring the American public's confidence in it are among the most important challenges before Congress.



**Figure 2.**  
**Projected Budget Surpluses**

The chart above illustrates that if Congress doesn't change its spending habits, we run the risk of creating long-term deficits and eliminating both Social Security and non-Social Security surpluses.

Source: Congressional Budget Office



• **Keeping a Promise** – Moreover, it is the obligation of the federal government to assure seniors that their futures are not in jeopardy, and that Social Security will be protected—especially as Congress debates and considers reforms to the system. That is why Senator Voinovich is pleased to be an original cosponsor of the Social Security Benefits Guarantee Act. This important legislation ensures seniors that they will receive **every cent** the government has promised them under Social Security, including an annual cost-of-living increase.

The government has promised Americans their Social Security checks, and seniors deserve these benefits without having to worry about reforms changing how much they will receive. Our nation's seniors deserve peace of mind and The Senator hopes that Congress will act quickly to enact this important legislation.



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*“It is the obligation of the federal government to assure seniors their future is not in jeopardy...our nation’s seniors deserve the assurance of a guarantee to their Social Security benefits.”*

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## *Senator Voinovich and Medicare*

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### **Congress Passes the Prescription Drug and Medicare Improvement Act of 2003**

On November 25, 2003, Congress passed sweeping legislation that will change the face of Medicare and finally help provide seniors with access to affordable prescription drugs. President Bush signed the bill into law December 9. As co-chair of the Senate Prescription Drug Task Force, Senator Voinovich worked tirelessly in support of this legislation.

The Prescription Drug and Medicare Improvement Act of 2003 will provide immediate prescription drug assistance as well as comprehensive drug coverage to seniors. Beginning in 2004, seniors will be able to receive prescription drug discount cards certified by Medicare that will provide immediate savings of 10-25 percent on most prescription drug purchases.



**Chart 1.**  
**Brand Name vs. Generic Drug Costs\***

Brand Name/ Strength	Brand Name Cost**	Generic Name	Generic Cost***	Generic Savings
<b>Cardizam CD 240 mg</b>	\$73.80	Diltiazem HCL	\$38.45	<b>\$35.35</b>
<b>Glucophage 500 mg</b>	\$73.07	Metformin HCL	\$17.01	<b>\$56.06</b>
<b>Hytrin 5 mg</b>	\$61.17	Terazosin HCL	\$30.09	<b>\$31.08</b>
<b>Vasotec 10 mg</b>	\$74.97	Enalapril Maleate	\$15.84	<b>\$59.13</b>
<b>Zantac 150 mg</b>	\$115.59	Ranitidine HCL	\$12.60	<b>\$102.99</b>

*Source: Blue Cross/Blue Shield*

*\*Based on most common strength for a 30 day supply*

*\*\*Brand name cost based on Average Wholesale Price obtained from various data sources (8/15/02)*

*\*\*\*Generic cost based on Blue Cross/Blue Shield schedule or discounted Average Wholesale Price (8/15/02)*



Additionally, the federal government will annually purchase the first \$600 in prescription drug costs for those seniors below 135 percent of the poverty level. See chart below for cost comparisons.

Comparison of Possible Cost-Sharing for Drugs Seniors Use Under the New Medicare Drug Benefit			
Selected Popular Drugs for Seniors		New Medicare Drug Benefit	
Drug Name	2002 Retail Price for 30 Tablets	Discounted Price	Beneficiary's 25 percent Contribution
Lopressor <i>High Blood Pressure</i>	\$45.99	\$36.79	\$9.20
Imdur <i>Heart Disease</i>	\$48.89	\$39.11	\$9.78
Lipitor <i>Cholesterol</i>	\$108.65	\$86.92	\$21.73
Proscar <i>Prostate</i>	\$82.59	\$66.07	\$16.52
Celebrex <i>Arthritis</i>	\$86.28	\$69.02	\$17.26
Zyrtec <i>Allergy</i>	\$69.52	\$55.62	\$13.91
Vanceril <i>Asthma</i>	\$51.05	\$40.84	\$10.21
Norvasc <i>High Blood Pressure</i>	\$34.94	\$27.95	\$6.99
Fosamax <i>Osteoporosis</i>	\$80.45	\$64.36	\$16.09
Zoloft <i>Anxiety</i>	\$78.96	\$63.17	\$15.79



The actual benefits, which will include a new Medicare Part D (stand-alone drug benefit under traditional Medicare) and a Medicare Advantage program (integrated benefit through a Preferred Provider Organization), will be implemented in January 2006. All Medicare beneficiaries will receive substantial subsidies through these new benefits. Low-income seniors will receive additional assistance on top of these subsidies. In Ohio, this means 624,416 seniors will receive additional assistance.

Also included in the legislation are provisions for choice of integrated health plans, rural health care provider relief, preservation of the traditional Medicare program with the addition of a prescription drug coverage and federal oversight of the new plan.

Passage of this historic bill means that seniors will now be able to obtain the life saving drugs they need without traveling to Canada or paying too much out of their own pockets for prescriptions.

Senator Voinovich is proud to have worked with a bipartisan group of colleagues on this bill that will serve seniors in Ohio and nationwide.





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## Offices of Senator Voinovich

My staff and I are ready to serve you at any of the following addresses and phone numbers:

U.S. Senator George Voinovich  
317 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Phone: (202) 224-3353  
Fax: (202) 228-1382  
TDD: (202) 224-6997

E-Mail Address:  
[senator\\_voinovich@voinovich.senate.gov](mailto:senator_voinovich@voinovich.senate.gov)

**Columbus Office**  
37 W. Broad St.  
Room 300  
Columbus, OH 43215  
614-469-6697

**Cincinnati Office**  
36 E. 7th St.  
Room 2615  
Cincinnati, OH 45202  
513-684-3265

**Cleveland Office**  
1240 E. 9th St.  
Room 2955  
Cleveland, OH 44199  
216-522-7095

**Toledo Office:**  
420 Madison Avenue  
Room 1210  
Toledo, OH 43604  
419-259-3895

### Constituent Services Hotline:

In addition, should you need assistance when dealing with any agency of the federal government, please do not hesitate to utilize the services of my casework office. Whether it is a glitch in getting your Social Security check, a denial of a rightfully deserved veteran's benefit or a problem with the IRS, please do not hesitate to call the joint Voinovich-DeWine casework office should you need assistance in dealing with any federal agency.

You may reach our office at:  
(800) 205-OHIO (6446)

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